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Response required by May 30, 2024
PO BOX 45043 RPO WESTSIDE, VICTORIA, BC, V9A 0C3

CITY OF VICTORIA | Saanich | VICTORIA SAANICH CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY

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Help determine whether Victoria and Saanich should amalgamate

1-in-12 households received this special invitation, please volunteer to serve your community

Dear Residents of
#101-1234 Pine Street
Anycity, BC, V#A #B#

Time-sensitive information inside

Response required by
May 30
Respond today

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CITY OF VICTORIA | Saanich | VICTORIA SAANICH CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY

April 12, 2024

Dear Resident,

This letter is a special invitation to volunteer to serve on the Victoria-Saanich Citizens' Assembly on Municipal Amalgamation. The Assembly will explore the costs, benefits and disadvantages of amalgamation between the two municipalities.

As they grow, municipalities sometimes consider whether they should merge with neighbouring jurisdictions. This process, called amalgamation, means combining the governments, geographic boundaries, municipal services and identities of two or more jurisdictions.

Over the years, the City of Victoria and the District of Saanich have considered whether they should amalgamate and become one municipality. During the 2018 General and Local School Board Elections, both municipalities asked a "Community Opinion Question" to gauge public support for establishing and funding a Citizens' Assembly to study the issue and reach a consensus on a recommendation. A majority of voters in both municipalities approved the measure and now, after being delayed by the pandemic, the Citizens' Assembly is moving forward.

The Citizens' Assembly is an independent process commissioned by the elected councils of both municipalities. Forty-eight randomly selected residents will serve on the Assembly, meeting over eight full-day sessions and two evening public meetings between September 2024 and April 2025.

This letter is an invitation to anyone in your household age 16 or older to volunteer as a candidate for the Citizens' Assembly.

With the assistance of independent experts from within and outside the region, the Assembly will learn about the municipalities and the issues around amalgamation, and deliberate together on whether and under what conditions amalgamation or further service integration should take place. The Assembly members will draft a report with their recommendations, which will be delivered to the elected councils of Victoria and Saanich in the summer of 2025.

The Assembly is one stage in a process. Before amalgamation could proceed, it would need to be endorsed by both councils and approved by a majority of voters in both municipalities during a referendum. The plan would then require the approval of the Government of British Columbia.

You do not need to be an expert to participate. It's your perspective as a local resident that matters most. From all the residents of Victoria and Saanich who respond to this invitation and volunteer, forty-eight people will be randomly selected in a way that ensures broad representation from across both communities.

If you have any questions about how you can participate as a member of the Assembly, please call the Assembly hotline at 1-833-319-1901.

Please turn over

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In order to participate, you must be:

- A resident of Victoria or Saanich for at least six months — you do not need to be a Canadian citizen
- 16 years of age or older by May 30, 2024
- Able to attend and participate in all of the sessions of the Citizens' Assembly

For more information about eligibility please review the Frequently Asked Questions enclosed. To volunteer for the Assembly, please call 1-833-319-1901, mail in the enclosed card, or register online at victoriasaanich.ca.

From the pool of volunteers, 48 people will be randomly selected to ensure broad representation from across the municipalities. The Assembly team will work with members to address any reasonable barriers that might prevent you from participating, such as childcare or eldercare costs. Accessibility supports will be provided as required.

Before considering your registration, please check your availability for the eight (8) session dates below. This is an important act of public service that requires commitment; you must be able to attend all of the following sessions:

September 21, 2024	November 2, 2024	January 11, 2025	March 8, 2025
October 19, 2024	November 30, 2024	February 8, 2025	April 5, 2025

Sessions are held on Saturdays from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. — breakfast, lunch, and refreshments will be provided. Questions or concerns? Review the enclosed Frequently Asked Questions or call the Assembly hotline at 1-833-319-1901.

This is an opportunity to serve your community, learn about civic issues, and shape the possible future of Saanich and Victoria. We sincerely hope you or another member of your household will consider registering your candidacy.

Sincerely,

Dean Murdock
Mayor, District of Saanich

Marianne Alto
Mayor, City of Victoria

Peter MacLeod
Chair, Victoria-Saanich Citizens' Assembly

How to register as a candidate for the Citizens' Assembly:

Please ensure you register in any of the following ways by Thursday, May 30, 2024:

1. Call the toll-free hotline 1-833-319-1901
2. Register securely online at victoriasaanich.ca
3. Complete the enclosed candidate response card and mail it back in the prepaid envelope.

If registering online or by telephone, please ensure you have your candidate response card with the unique keycode ready.

Please ensure you register by Thursday, May 30, 2024. If you are selected for the Assembly via the Civic Lottery, you will receive an email on Tuesday, June 4, 2024. An Assembly team member will then telephone selectees to confirm registration details, answer any questions you may have, and prepare you to serve on the Assembly.

If you are unable to participate, please encourage another member of your household 16 years of age or older to volunteer.

Frequently Asked Questions

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What is a Citizens' Assembly?
A Citizens' Assembly is a representative body of citizens tasked by a government to study, deliberate, and develop recommendations on a specific issue. Typically, members of a Citizens' Assembly are randomly selected from a pool of volunteers who pledge to work on behalf of all community members over several weeks or months. The Assembly's recommendations are generally developed by consensus and are intended to represent the community's best interests.

Why have a Citizens' Assembly?
The Citizens' Assembly on Municipal Amalgamation is a deliberative process intended to provide local residents with an opportunity to actively participate in developing and evaluating the case for amalgamating the City of Victoria and the District of Saanich. The Citizens' Assembly will be an impartial advisory body that provides detailed recommendations representing a broad consensus concerning the proposed amalgamation. The Assembly will work to represent all residents and exemplify high standards of transparency, accountability, and robust civic participation.

The decision to amalgamate has far-reaching consequences, and both councils believe they will benefit from the perspective of area residents participating in an informed arm's-length process.

What is the mandate of the Citizens' Assembly?
The Assembly will explore the costs, benefits and disadvantages of amalgamation between the City of Victoria and the District of Saanich. They will detail their work and guidance in an interim and a final report which will be presented to the councils of the two municipalities. The final report will include the Assembly's recommendation(s) and could include suggestions related to service integrations.

The Assembly is one stage in a process. Before amalgamation could proceed, it must be endorsed by both councils and approved by a majority of voters in both municipalities during a referendum. The plan would then require the approval of the Government of British Columbia.

What would be my role as a Citizens' Assembly member?
Over eight (8) Saturdays beginning in September 2024 and ending in April 2025, Citizens' Assembly members will learn and work together to develop interim and final public reports that will provide guidance to both councils concerning the prospect of amalgamating the City of Victoria and District of Saanich.

To assist the members of the Assembly with their work, a thorough program will provide each member with the opportunity:

- to learn about the municipalities' respective infrastructure, services, operations, and governance;
- to inform and review the Amalgamation Study being undertaken concurrently with the Citizens' Assembly;
- to learn from past municipal amalgamations; and,
- to consult with and learn from independent experts as well as fellow residents.

Assembly members will be asked to attend two (2) public meetings in the home municipalities to learn from and consult residents. These meetings will take place in the fall of 2024 and winter of 2025 — final dates and locations will be announced and promoted within each community.

How do I become a member of the Citizens' Assembly?
First, you must respond to this invitation using the unique keycode by Thursday, May 30, 2024.

- Call the toll-free hotline 1-833-319-1901;
- Register securely online at victoriasaanich.ca; or,
- Complete the enclosed candidate response card and mail it back in the prepaid envelope.

If you are selected for the Assembly via the Civic Lottery (see below), you will receive an email on Tuesday, June 4, 2024. An Assembly team member will then telephone you to confirm registration details, answer any questions you may have, and prepare you to serve on the Assembly. If you are unable to participate, please encourage another member of your household 16 years of age or older to volunteer.

How will members of the Citizens' Assembly be chosen?
On June 3, the 48 members of the Citizens' Assembly will be selected by a special random draw, called a Civic Lottery, from the pool of registered candidates. Twenty-seven (27) participants will be randomly selected from the District of Saanich, and twenty-one (21) will be selected from the City of Victoria. The Civic Lottery process also ensures that the Assembly is representative of other criteria, such as age, gender, housing status, and self-identified ethnicity. The result will be 48 Assembly members that broadly represent the residents of Victoria and Saanich.

Why are the members of the Assembly randomly selected?
Today, similar selection processes are routinely used in Canada and abroad to ensure that the membership of an Assembly broadly reflects the demography and diversity of thought and experience within any given community or population.

Who is eligible to serve on the Citizens' Assembly?
You are eligible to volunteer for and serve on the Assembly if you:

- are a resident of the address where the invitation was mailed;
- can provide the unique keycode printed on your candidate response card;
- are a resident of Victoria or Saanich and have been for at least six months;
- are 16 years of age or older as of May 30, 2024; and,
- can attend and participate in all eight (8) Assembly sessions.

You do not need to be a Canadian citizen to volunteer. Special provisions will be made for unhoused or underhoused residents who wish to participate. For more information, please contact the toll-free hotline at 1-833-319-1901.

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Who is ineligible to serve on the Citizens' Assembly?
From the time of the lottery registration deadline to the issuing of the Assembly report, Assembly members must not be:

- A current employee or a representative of employees of the municipalities of Victoria or Saanich;
- An elected official or a representative of elected officials at any level of government;
- A member of a municipal board, committee, or foundation; and/or,
- A business or organization actively providing research, policy, or planning advice to either municipality.

I am unfamiliar with this issue — can I still be involved?
Absolutely. We do not expect you to have any specialized knowledge about municipal governance. Your perspective and experience as a Saanich or Victoria resident matters most. Facilitators and experts will be on hand to answer any questions you may have throughout the sessions.

Will I get paid to serve on the Assembly?
No. Members of the Assembly serve voluntarily. Breakfast, lunch, and snacks will be provided, and reasonable travel costs, including parking and transit, will be reimbursed. Childcare and eldercare costs will also be covered as required.

Can another member of my household volunteer for the Citizens' Assembly?
Yes. This invitation is transferable to any one person 16 years of age or older who would like to participate as an Assembly member and who lives at the address on this letter. The Assembly team encourages anyone who wants to participate in this exercise to volunteer.

I am unsure whether I can attend all eight sessions, can I still apply?
Unfortunately, no. Candidates must be available for all eight Assembly sessions. Please consider and confirm your ability to participate before applying. If you can't join us, please share this opportunity with someone else in your household, age 16 years or older, who can.

Can I still be involved without being chosen for the Citizens' Assembly?
Yes. If you are not randomly selected as a member of the Assembly or cannot volunteer as a candidate, we hope you will attend one of two public meetings in the fall of 2024 (November 20 and 21 - tentative) or the winter of 2025 (dates to be announced).

We encourage you to register your interest, even if you cannot participate on the Assembly, by calling the toll-free hotline 1-833-319-1901; by filling out the secure form online at victoriasaanich.ca; or by completing the enclosed candidate response card and mailing it back in the prepaid envelope. You will then be contacted via email about upcoming public meeting details.

Who is running the Citizens' Assembly?
To ensure the impartiality of the process, the municipalities have hired an independent organization with significant expertise in the design and execution of Civic Lottery and Citizens' Assembly processes.

Following a competitive tender, the contract to run the Assembly was awarded to MASS LBP in November 2023. MASS staff members, including the Assembly Chair, will design and lead each session and report to the Chief Administrative Officer of each municipality as well as a special committee of both councils.

Accessibility Supports:
We are committed to working with you to help address any barriers to your participation. Here are some of the supports we make available to all members of the Assembly:

- Reimbursements for childcare and eldercare;
- Meals and snacks during each session, and accommodation for any dietary restrictions;
- Accessible meeting spaces;
- Accommodation for people with hearing, visual, physical, or other disabilities; and,
- Session locations that are close to transit and parking.

For information about other accessibility supports, please call the toll-free hotline at 1-833-319-1901.

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If you are unable to participate, please encourage another member of your household 16 years of age or older to volunteer.

Candidate Response Card

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❑ **YES, I would like to volunteer as a member of the Victoria-Saanich Citizens' Assembly**

❑ No, I do not wish to volunteer, but would like to receive updates about other ways to participate.

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Gender: ❑ Man / ❑ Woman / ❑ _____ Age: ❑ 16 to 29 ❑ 30 to 44 ❑ 45 to 64 ❑ 65+

Primary Phone Number: ___-___-____ Secondary Phone Number: ___-___-____

Email: _____

Dear Residents of
#101-1234 Pine Street
Anycity, BC, V#A #B#

KEYCODE

Response required by

May 30

Respond today

If you have any questions about the Assembly, please call 1-833-319-1901.

Candidate Response Card

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Please complete your candidate response card by checking all that apply:

1) My ownership/tenancy status is best described as: ❑ I own my home ❑ I rent my home
❑ I rent my home and my rent is subsidized ❑ Other: _____

2) I identify as (pick all that apply): ❑ Indigenous, First Nations, Métis, Inuit ❑ Visible Minority/Racialized
❑ White/Caucasian ❑ Describe: _____

3) I am available to attend all of the full-day Saturday meetings of the Assembly: ❑ Yes ❑ No

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The City of Victoria and the District of Saanich have commissioned MASS LBP to plan and implement the Citizens' Assembly process. This form's purpose is to collect candidate information for the Assembly member selection process and/or contact information for those interested in other ways to participate in the Assembly process. Names, addresses, and other contact information will be deleted at the end of the Assembly process — these are never shared. Deidentified and anonymized response information will be used to help inform the work of future assembly processes. If you have any questions about the collection and use of this information, please call 1-833-319-1901 or email info@victoriasaanich.ca

Response required by
May 30
Respond today

Return Address

Response required by:
May 30, 2024

Register by mailing the response card enclosed
or by calling 1-833-319-1901

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1000465445-V9A0C3-BR01

CITIZENS ASSEMBLY
PO BOX 45043 RPO WESTSIDE
VICTORIA BC V9A 9Z9